

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING BUDGET PROPOSAL
FEBRUARY 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide my testimony during this public hearing.

I have had the gift of being able to spend the last 45 years working on behalf of people with serious mental illnesses and other serious health problems to achieve healthier, more productive lives as members of our communities. As I now pass my own three quarter century mark, I have continued to work on behalf of those who are homeless. Homelessness is an unforgiveable condition in a just society, and it is destructive of the lives of those who are homeless, of their communities, and expensive in terms of health care and public safety.

Our Governor and the Legislature have been leaders in working to end homelessness for veterans and for those who are chronically homeless. The Governor's budget recognizes that investing in housing and services results in improving the quality of lives of those who are homeless, of their communities, and lowers costs to the state over time. People who are chronically homeless have some of the highest health care costs because one cannot attend to one's health when basic survival each day is the challenge. Any cuts to these basic services will only add costs to the Medicaid budget, and may also result in the loss of lives of those who can no longer survive living on the streets.

I urge members of the Appropriations Committee and of the General Assembly to preserve the the DOH housing and homelessness line item which funds homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters and the Rental Assistance Program , which is essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing. I support the recommendations outlined by the Partnership for Strong Communities to the Committee.

Thank you for your consideration,

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